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SIPDIS

S/AVIAN INFLUENZA ACTION GROUP, OES/IHA, EUR/WE, EAP/BCLTV,
HHS FOR INTL: STEIGER/BUDASHEWITZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DONOR RESPONSE TO AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK IN
BURMA - DEMARCHE DELIVERED TO FRENCH

REF: SECSTATE 43425

1. On March 21, ESTH Counselor and Science Affairs Specialist delivered reftel demarche to the French MFA Burma/Thailand desk officer Franck Vermeulen and Ambassador for Avian Influenza Preparedness Jean Garbe. Vermeulen stated that France has no bilateral assistance programs with Burma and it has received no request from the Burmese for technical assistance in dealing with avian influenza. France's official presence in Burma is limited and no Pasteur Institute affiliate institute operates there. If any action is envisaged by Burmese authorities, the appropriate channel for assistance would be the European Union. To Vermeulen's understanding, no request for help from Burma has been made to EU authorities.

2. Vermeulen said that the Burmese handling of avian influenza is "inspired by" the Thai model, and that cooperation with WHO appears satisfactory. Referring to the military regime in Burma, Vermeulen commented that the presence of government representatives in each village generates control and reporting on bird health issues. He noted, however, that this was not the case in areas not fully under Burmese government control. Vermeulen commented that during the tsunami crisis, local Burmese authorities opted for openness and transparency in reporting casualties in the country.

--- French Bilateral Cooperation Elsewhere ---

3. Ambassador Garbe indicated that France's bilateral avian influenza cooperation is limited to three countries in Southeast Asia: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and is conducted via the Pasteur Institute. In Africa, experts from the French Agricultural Research Center for International Development, specializing in tropical and sub-tropical regions, are working in coordination with OIE, FAO and WHO on avian influenza-related issues. Garbe mentioned the view, that for him, the real avian influenza concern is in Africa given the "inability of African nations to address the situation."

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Stapleton